

ago, and it is my special privilege to acknowledge him for he came as the regional leader of the NAACP more than four decades ago to Houston, Texas, and he never forgot the routing and the importance of educating our young people about the emancipation.

So I stand today to be able to chronicle the history and to thank those who are now fighting the battle to preserve Freedman's Town in Houston, Texas, a town that was formulated by freed slaves right after the Emancipation Proclamation that is now under siege by those who would desire to disrupt the few remaining historic buildings and blocks and, if you will, bricks that make up the street, cobblestone bricks. I pray that the energy of those remaining, Reverend Samuel Smith, Captain Roberts, Reverend Robertson, will hold on, and the number of churches that are in that area, that we will fight for the establishment of a Freedman's Town corridor in the name and in tribute of Juneteenth and the emancipation of our people.

Let me cite for those a depictive picture that shows both celebration and shock as Major Gordon Granger came into Galveston to be able to announce that these yet humble servants, these slaves, were yet free.

Let me quickly go to the language that was offered to me in remarks made by Curtis Faulkner. I want to read, first of all, just a few brief words from the message of Abraham Lincoln during the emancipation: "Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance, or insignificance, can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. We say we are for the union. The world will not forget that we say this."

So he spoke of saving the union, but he also laid the ground work for the Emancipation Proclamation.

He continued: "Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just—a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud and God must forever bless."

This was the genesis of the emancipation of slaves, but yet we are still wracked by discrimination and disparity. So when I speak of education and No Child Left Behind, I use Houston as an additional laboratory, testing the fear of children and not the learning of children. We want to reform so that all of our children can learn. Poor funding for underperforming schools, a failure of this administration that never decided to fund. Closing schools, lack of pay for teachers, all of that is meaningful.

I close, Mr. Speaker, by saying this. Freedom is not enough and you do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying now you are free. We want the emancipation to be known in our hearts. We want a national holiday for

the Juneteenth. And I look forward to working with my colleagues to commemorate, celebrate, and be reminded of the sweat and blood and tears of those who stand here today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

JUNETEENTH/BLAIR'S BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RUSH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, I stand here today, along with my congressional Black Caucus colleagues, in recognition of Juneteenth Day. It is fitting for us to not only acknowledge where we have been in the past but also to evaluate where we are today as a people.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most pressing issues in the African American community remains the issue of education. Many of my colleagues have outlined the progress and the challenges that many African American students face as they strive to acquire the educational benefits that every American should receive.

In the words of the great African American leader Malcolm X: "Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today."

Education is, of course, the key to a bright future. And it is the vital ingredient in finding success and achieving the American Dream. While African Americans have come very far, educationally, there is still much work to do at the Federal, at the State, at the local, and at the family level to ensure that all of our students are learning and are being given the chance to succeed.

Today, Mr. Speaker, African American females, in particular, are achieving gains in education that were previously unheard of. Black females are graduating from college, graduate school, and post-graduate school at record levels. And this is something we can all be proud of and take comfort in.

However, Mr. Speaker, there are still many problems. Today, our Nation has more African American men in prison than in college. In many urban cities, Black males are dropping out of high school at a rate of 50 percent and even less are going to college.

One problem that many of our young students face is the issue of gun violence that pervades our community. Mr. Speaker, we have to make the schools and the neighborhoods that we live in safe for our students. We must address the gun violence that is plaguing so many of our communities.

African American males under age 30 are nearly nine times more likely to be

murdered than a white male under age 30. African Americans make up only 13 percent of the population of our Nation but in 2001 suffered almost 25 percent of all firearms deaths, and 52 percent of all firearm homicides.

Mr. Speaker, just days ago, on May 10, a student, Blair Holt, was riding home from school on a public bus and was fatally shot while trying to shield a young female friend from a gunman's bullet. Blair Holt was an honor student with plans to attend college, and instead, his young life was prematurely taken for no reason at all. Mr. Speaker, this school year alone, 31 Chicago public school students have been murdered; 31 students have lost their lives; 31 students have not given their talents, their skills, and their abilities to make this world a better place.

While this statistic is true for the schools in my district, gun violence is all around. Gun violence is prevalent in so many of the communities all around this Nation. And we must put an end to this domestic terrorism that is destroying communities and making our constituents live in fear. As elected officials, it is incumbent upon us to enact legislation that would help reduce the flow of guns into our communities and help our struggling and frustrated law enforcement departments all across this Nation to keep track of those who possess guns and where those guns are.

I have introduced H.R. 2666, Blair's bill, which would implement a Federal gun licensing and registry program. This bill will help law enforcement track over 200 million guns that are too often ending up in the hands of criminals, young people, and gang members.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2666 is a step in the right direction. We must do all that we can for our Nation's children.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. CLARKE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. CLARKE addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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GETTING SMART ABOUT IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I have come down to this floor more than 200 times to hold the administration accountable for its actions in Iraq. Since then, we have seen it all, from freedom fries to "the surge." During these dog days of summer, however, we can't relent. We have to join together as never before because this administration is moving in new and even more dangerous directions in foreign policy. Let me give you an example.

Several weeks ago, the administration confirmed what I had been saying